

CENTER FOR DISABILITY ACCESS  
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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

**Brian Whitaker,**

Plaintiff,

v.

**Phonamenon Management  
Group, LLC**, a California  
Corporation; and Does 1-10,

Defendants.

**Case No.**

**Complaint For Damages And  
Injunctive Relief For Violations  
Of: American's With Disabilities  
Act; Unruh Civil Rights Act**

Plaintiff Brian Whitaker complains of Phonamenon Management Group, LLC, a California Corporation; and Does 1-10 ("Defendants"), and alleges as follows:

**PARTIES:**

1. Plaintiff is a California resident with physical disabilities. He is substantially limited in his ability to walk. He suffers from a C-4 spinal cord injury. He is a quadriplegic. He uses a wheelchair for mobility.

2. Defendant Phonamenon Management Group, LLC owned Freshroll Vietnamese Rolls & Bowls located at or about 157 4<sup>th</sup> Street, San Francisco, California, in September 2019.

1       3. Defendant Phonamenon Management Group, LLC owns Freshroll  
 2 Vietnamese Rolls & Bowls (“Restaurant”) located at or about 157 4<sup>th</sup> Street,  
 3 San Francisco, California, currently.

4       4. Plaintiff does not know the true names of Defendants, their business  
 5 capacities, their ownership connection to the property and business, or their  
 6 relative responsibilities in causing the access violations herein complained of,  
 7 and alleges a joint venture and common enterprise by all such Defendants.  
 8 Plaintiff is informed and believes that each of the Defendants herein,  
 9 including Does 1 through 10, inclusive, is responsible in some capacity for the  
 10 events herein alleged, or is a necessary party for obtaining appropriate relief.  
 11 Plaintiff will seek leave to amend when the true names, capacities,  
 12 connections, and responsibilities of the Defendants and Does 1 through 10,  
 13 inclusive, are ascertained.

14  
 15       **JURISDICTION & VENUE:**

16       5. The Court has subject matter jurisdiction over the action pursuant to 28  
 17 U.S.C. § 1331 and § 1343(a)(3) & (a)(4) for violations of the Americans with  
 18 Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.

19       6. Pursuant to supplemental jurisdiction, an attendant and related cause  
 20 of action, arising from the same nucleus of operative facts and arising out of  
 21 the same transactions, is also brought under California’s Unruh Civil Rights  
 22 Act, which act expressly incorporates the Americans with Disabilities Act.

23       7. Venue is proper in this court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b) and is  
 24 founded on the fact that the real property which is the subject of this action is  
 25 located in this district and that Plaintiff's cause of action arose in this district.

26  
 27       **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS:**

28       8. Plaintiff went to the Restaurant in September 2019 with the intention

1 to avail himself of its goods, motivated in part to determine if the defendants  
2 comply with the disability access laws.

3 9. The Restaurant is a facility open to the public, a place of public  
4 accommodation, and a business establishment.

5 10. Unfortunately, on the date of the plaintiff's visit, the defendants failed  
6 to provide accessible dining surfaces.

7 11. On information and belief, the defendants currently fail to provide  
8 accessible dining surfaces.

9 12. Plaintiff personally encountered these barriers.

10 13. By failing to provide accessible facilities, the defendants denied the  
11 plaintiff full and equal access.

12 14. The failure to provide accessible facilities created difficulty and  
13 discomfort for the Plaintiff.

14 15. Even though the plaintiff did not confront the barrier, on information  
15 and belief the defendants currently fail to provide accessible paths of travel  
16 leading to the restroom.

17 16. The defendants have failed to maintain in working and useable  
18 conditions those features required to provide ready access to persons with  
19 disabilities.

20 17. The barriers identified above are easily removed without much  
21 difficulty or expense. They are the types of barriers identified by the  
22 Department of Justice as presumably readily achievable to remove and, in fact,  
23 these barriers are readily achievable to remove. Moreover, there are numerous  
24 alternative accommodations that could be made to provide a greater level of  
25 access if complete removal were not achievable.

26 18. Plaintiff will return to the Restaurant to avail himself of its goods and to  
27 determine compliance with the disability access laws once it is represented to  
28 him that the Restaurant and its facilities are accessible. Plaintiff is currently

1 deterred from doing so because of his knowledge of the existing barriers and  
2 his uncertainty about the existence of yet other barriers on the site. If the  
3 barriers are not removed, the plaintiff will face unlawful and discriminatory  
4 barriers again.

5 19. Given the obvious and blatant nature of the barriers and violations  
6 alleged herein, the plaintiff alleges, on information and belief, that there are  
7 other violations and barriers on the site that relate to his disability. Plaintiff will  
8 amend the complaint, to provide proper notice regarding the scope of this  
9 lawsuit, once he conducts a site inspection. However, please be on notice that  
10 the plaintiff seeks to have all barriers related to his disability remedied. See  
11 *Doran v. 7-11*, 524 F.3d 1034 (9th Cir. 2008) (holding that once a plaintiff  
12 encounters one barrier at a site, he can sue to have all barriers that relate to his  
13 disability removed regardless of whether he personally encountered them).

14  
15 **I. FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION: VIOLATION OF THE AMERICANS**  
16 **WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990** (On behalf of Plaintiff and against all  
17 Defendants.) (42 U.S.C. section 12101, et seq.)

18 20. Plaintiff re-pleads and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth  
19 again herein, the allegations contained in all prior paragraphs of this  
20 complaint.

21 21. Under the ADA, it is an act of discrimination to fail to ensure that the  
22 privileges, advantages, accommodations, facilities, goods and services of any  
23 place of public accommodation is offered on a full and equal basis by anyone  
24 who owns, leases, or operates a place of public accommodation. See 42 U.S.C.  
25 § 12182(a). Discrimination is defined, inter alia, as follows:

- 26 a. A failure to make reasonable modifications in policies, practices,  
27 or procedures, when such modifications are necessary to afford  
28 goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or

1 accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless the  
2 accommodation would work a fundamental alteration of those  
3 services and facilities. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii).

4 b. A failure to remove architectural barriers where such removal is  
5 readily achievable. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv). Barriers are  
6 defined by reference to the ADA Standards.

7 c. A failure to make alterations in such a manner that, to the  
8 maximum extent feasible, the altered portions of the facility are  
9 readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities,  
10 including individuals who use wheelchairs or to ensure that, to the  
11 maximum extent feasible, the path of travel to the altered area and  
12 the bathrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving the  
13 altered area, are readily accessible to and usable by individuals  
14 with disabilities. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(2).

15 22. When a business provides facilities such as dining surfaces, it must  
16 provide accessible dining surfaces.

17 23. Here, accessible dining surfaces have not been provided.

18 24. When a business provides paths of travel, it must provide accessible  
19 paths of travel.

20 25. Here, accessible paths of travel have not been provided.

21 26. The Safe Harbor provisions of the 2010 Standards are not applicable  
22 here because the conditions challenged in this lawsuit do not comply with the  
23 1991 Standards.

24 27. A public accommodation must maintain in operable working condition  
25 those features of its facilities and equipment that are required to be readily  
26 accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities. 28 C.F.R. § 36.211(a).

27 28. Here, the failure to ensure that the accessible facilities were available  
28 and ready to be used by the plaintiff is a violation of the law.

**II. SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION: VIOLATION OF THE UNRUH CIVIL RIGHTS ACT** (On behalf of Plaintiff and against all Defendants.) (Cal. Civ. Code § 51-53.)

29. Plaintiff repleads and incorporates by reference, as if fully set forth again herein, the allegations contained in all prior paragraphs of this complaint. The Unruh Civil Rights Act (“Unruh Act”) guarantees, inter alia, that persons with disabilities are entitled to full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all business establishment of every kind whatsoever within the jurisdiction of the State of California. Cal. Civ. Code § 51(b).

30. The Unruh Act provides that a violation of the ADA is a violation of the Unruh Act. Cal. Civ. Code, § 51(f).

31. Defendants’ acts and omissions, as herein alleged, have violated the Unruh Act by, inter alia, denying, or aiding, or inciting the denial of, Plaintiff’s rights to full and equal use of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services offered.

32. Because the violation of the Unruh Civil Rights Act resulted in difficulty, discomfort or embarrassment for the plaintiff, the defendants are also each responsible for statutory damages, i.e., a civil penalty. (Civ. Code § 55.56(a)-(c).)

**PRAYER:**

Wherefore, Plaintiff prays that this Court award damages and provide relief as follows:

1. For injunctive relief, compelling Defendants to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Unruh Civil Rights Act. Note: the plaintiff is not invoking section 55 of the California Civil Code and is not seeking injunctive relief under the Disabled Persons Act at all.

1        2. Damages under the Unruh Civil Rights Act, which provides for actual  
2 damages and a statutory minimum of \$4,000 for each offense.

3        3. Reasonable attorney fees, litigation expenses and costs of suit, pursuant  
4 to 42 U.S.C. § 12205; and Cal. Civ. Code §§ 52.

5  
6 Dated: October 10, 2019

CENTER FOR DISABILITY ACCESS

7  
8 By:



9  
10 Amanda Seabock, Esq.  
11 Attorney for plaintiff  
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